That itinerant and ubiquitous personage known in the East as the tramp has a counterpart in the West under the cognomen of "grub-rider." The latter is equipped with a horse and has the happy faculty of arriving at a ranch just about meal time. He usually remains until informed that the proprietor would greatly prefer his room to his company. We have met the son of an English earl engaged in this enobling (?) profession.

Our prevailing warm westerly wind is a "chinook," coming as it does from the direction of the Chinook or Flathead Indian country.

"Outfit" is the great and universal word for any emergency; "lay-out" and "truck" have likewise a multitudinous variety of applications. It used to be said that in the West a person conversing need never be solicitous about running short of a word so long as "outfit" was in his vocabulary.

15. MONSTERS OF THE WEST: THE SASQUATCH AND THE OGOPOGO

M. Carole Henderson

This article surveys a type of modern folklore current in western Canada which has been much in the news in recent years. M. Carole Henderson, a native of British Columbia, is particularly interested in studying the relationship of folklore to Canadian culture. Here she discusses B.C.'s two famous monsters and advances some reasons why legends about monsters circulate more in western Canada than in eastern Canada.

Monsters of one form or another seem to have titillated the human imagination for untold years. Throughout recorded history, people have included super- or sub-human beings, giants, ogres, dragons, fanciful beasts of many descriptions, and frightening figures in widely variant forms among their cultural traditions. That all such people fervently believed in the literal truth of these monsters certainly is open to dispute, but the fact that they told stories about such creatures definitely is not. As Harvey Cox wrote about mankind's propensity for fantasy:

> . . . there is certainly [no culture] that lacks its share of wild and improbable stories. Fairies, goblins, giants, and elves – or their equivalent – inhabit the imagination of every race.[1]

It is, therefore, not at all unexpected that Canadians should have monster traditions, as indeed they have had and still do. The "loup-garou," or werewolf, was a rather common figure in French-Canadian folklore; the Bogey-man in many forms has been and still is used to control Canadian children; some people in Newfoundland still believe in fairies of evil temperament; and the native peoples once entertained various levels of belief in monsters such as Sedna, the hag the Inuit thought lived under the sea, and D'Sonoqua, the cannibal woman of the Pacific North Coast.

What is most surprising about current monster lore in Canada is the nature and locations of the most prominent beast traditions. Today, the most popular Canadian monsters are not those that pervaded the folklore of Canada's earliest and eastern settlers from Europe. Rather, they are the Sasquatch and the Ogopogo which, while having a venerable ancestry in Indian tradition, have acquired peculiar significance for the non-native populace of Canada, especially in the west.

Sasquatch, a wild ape-man of the woods, and Ogopogo, a lake serpent, are most commonly associated with British Columbia. There have, however, been accounts of them, or like forms, elsewhere in Canada and in the United States, as well as abroad. Sasquatch in particular is known in Washington, Oregon, and California where he is commonly referred to as "Bigfoot." Internationally, he appears as the Yeti or famous Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas, and under various names elsewhere. North American accounts of and international parallels to the Sasquatch are given in various sources.[2]

Ogopogo, by contrast, is more exclusively identified with Lake Okanagan in south-central British Columbia, though he or she (the sex of the monster is, as yet, undetermined) has definite relatives both at home and abroad. The Canadian relations include Cadborosaurus, or "Caddie" for short, a sea serpent first reported on October 11, 1933, in Cadboro Bay on the south-east coast of Vancouver Island. The most important international parallel of Ogopogo is, of course, "Nessie," the Great Orm of Loch Ness.[3]

The following discussion concerns the nature of the Sasquatch and the Ogopogo and their history in Canadian cultural tradition. It also considers the possible interpretations of belief in them and explains why these particular monster traditions appear in western Canada though not in eastern Canada. One obvious explanation, and one supported by a number of people, especially those who have reported seeing the monsters, is that these creatures really exist in the west. Many books such as *Sasquatch* by Don Hunter and Rene Dahinden; John Green's three works *On the Track of the Sasquatch, The Year of the Sasquatch,* and *The Sasquatch File*; R. P. MacLean's *Ogopogo: His Story*; and innumerable newspaper and popular magazine accounts give arguments in

favour of the actual existence of the monsters. No attempt is made here to validate this explanation; rather, emphasis is given to the folklore nature of these beasts and their role as legendary figures in human culture.

More than three hundred eye-witness reports of Sasquatch/Bigfoot from Canada and the United States, as well as many other accounts, make it possible to create a composite description of the creature. Accordingly, Sasquatch (whose name is an Anglicization of a Coast Salish word meaning roughly "wild man of the woods") is between six and eleven feet, though most commonly seven or eight feet tall. Typically, he is covered in reddish brown or auburn hair, though other hair colours from black to silvery-white have been reported. On his head, this hair grows five to six inches in length and hangs in a "bang" over the forehead. Female Sasquatches (less frequently reported on than the males) have hairy breasts except immediately around the nipples. Other sexual characteristics are seldom remarked upon. The Sasquatch has broad shoulders (up to four feet), a barrel-chest, and no obvious neck, resulting in his hunched appearance. His face is monkey- or ape-like with a backward sloping forehead, a flattened nose, and a slit-like, lipless mouth. Often he is said to have a cone-shaped head and a very prominent big toe. His footprints are between twelve and twenty-two inches, though most commonly fourteen to eighteen inches, long and usually seven inches wide. The Sasquatch has seldom been known to show any aggressive behaviour and has most frequently been described as fleeing or standing immobile, staring expressionless, with his arms by his sides.

David Thompson gave the earliest recorded account of a reputed Sasquatch in a journal kept during his journey across the Rockies near the present-day site of Jasper, Alberta. In his entry for January 5 to 8, 1811, Thompson remarks on the belief current among the natives accompanying him in "the Mammoth" (a huge man-like creature said to inhabit the mountains) and on the party's subsequent discovery of huge tracks considered by the Indians and some of Thompson's men to be those of a young mammoth.[4]

Earlier accounts doubtless would exist had they been collected when extant, for Sasquatch-like beings have been a part of the native folklore of the Americas for centuries. Bacil Kirtley discusses the role of such creatures in the folklore of the North American native peoples in an article, "Unknown Hominids and the New World Legends," in *Western Folklore*. In Canada, the Cree told of the Weeketow, the Saulteux of the Windigo, and the Pacific North Coast peoples of wild woods creatures in various forms. In *Klee Wyck*, her account of travels among the Pacific Coast natives, Emily Carr gives a sensitive portrayal of one common form, D'Sonoqua, the cannibal woman who lured children into the woods and stole them away. Representative of Sasquatch stories ob-

tained more recently from Coast Indians is the following account which Wayne Suttle collected from Julius Charles, a Lummi Indian, and published in an article "On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch":

> The [Straits language term for the Sasquatch] is a great tall animal or whatever it was that lived in the mountains. It was like a man but shaggy like a bear, like a big monkey seven feet tall. They went away when the whites came. (The Indians never killed any; it was a pretty wise animal, or whatever you call it.) If you saw one it made you kind of crazy. They throw their power toward you.
>
> Over 40 years ago some fellow across the line [in Canada] went hunting deer early one morning when snow was on the ground. He saw one and followed it to the edge of a lake where it disappeared. He went home and got kind of crazy. His wife put him to sleep by the fire (they were living in a kind of smokehouse) and while she was out getting wood he rolled into the fire and died. (He was a half-breed named Arthur – lived up toward the Fraser.)

The Coast Indians considered the wilderness in which they lived to be inhabited by many strange creatures, most of which can be identified as animals of nature. Others, unknown to Europeans, have typically, though perhaps unjustifiably, been classified as mythical supernatural beings. It cannot be proven that the Indians themselves saw these creatures as mythical, but anthropologists and other scholars have generally considered them such, much to the dismay of Sasquatch buffs like Rene Dahinden and John Green who cite the Indian stories and belief as evidence for the actual existence of the Sasquatch.

Other than the native accounts, stories of Sasquatches began appearing in the late nineteenth century. The first major account, and the only well-documented story ever of a capture of a supposed Sasquatch, appeared in a Victoria newspaper, *The Daily Colonist*, on Friday, July 4, 1884. Apparently, the crew of a train travelling between Lytton and Yale, B.C., pursued and captured a gorilla-type creature standing about 4 feet, 7 inches tall and weighing about 127 pounds, whom they dubbed "Jacko." He had long, coarse black hair on his head, and resembled a man except for having short glossy black hair all over. His forearm was much longer than a man's and he possessed extraordinary strength demonstrated by his ability to take a fresh branch and tear it in two as no man could do. Jacko's ultimate fate is unknown though he was to be taken to London and exhibited.

There were reports soon after of sightings of similar creatures both in the Fraser Canyon area of the mainland and on Vancouver Island. Accounts of the Sasquatch surfaced sporadically from the 1920s to the 1950s. In the 1920s, J.W. Burns, a school teacher on the Chehalis Indian Reserve near Harrison Hot Springs, popularized the term "Sa-

squatch" by writing frequent articles about the creature, which were often based on Indian stories and which achieved wide circulation in newspapers and magazines throughout North America. As a result, Harrison Hot Springs adopted the Sasquatch image for advertising purposes, and for some years sponsored a local celebration called "Sasquatch Days."

Another unique Sasquatch story is set in British Columbia in the first half of this century, although it was not collected until thirty-four years after it supposedly occurred. In 1924, Alfred Ostman, a construction worker, spent his vacation looking for a lost gold mine near the head of Toba Inlet in the Coast Mountains. After several days of hiking, camping, and prospecting, during which his camp was disturbed several times, he was awakened one night by something picking him up. He was carried for some hours into the "camp" of a Sasquatch family, consisting of an adult male, adult female, a young girl, and a boy, where he remained captive for six days. He was unharmed by the Sasquatch, who seemingly left him to his own devices, enabling him to observe them at close quarters. He noted that they never ate meat nor did any cooking while he was with them; they spent a considerable portion, but not all, of their waking hours looking for roots and other foodstuffs; and they communicated with one another through sounds and signs. Finally, he managed to escape when a disturbance resulted from the elder male Sasquatch's swallowing a can of snuff. Ostman ran away, was not, to his knowledge, followed, and eventually came upon a logging camp where he was treated hospitably. He told the loggers of his prospecting activities, but nothing about having been captured by a Sasquatch. In 1958 he related his full story to John Green who published it in *On the Track of the Sasquatch.*

Much Sasquatch-lore surfaced in the mid-1950s as a result of the vastly increased publicity the creature received at that time. In 1957, Harrison Hot Springs decided to sponsor a "Sasquatch hunt" as its 1958 British Columbia Centennial project. Though the plan never reached fruition, it achieved its primary purposes of gaining publicity for the region and arousing interest in the Sasquatch. Many people formerly reluctant to discuss their encounters with or stories about the Sasquatch came forward, and soon John Green, editor of the weekly newspaper in nearby Agassiz, amassed a considerable collection of such material, much of which he has published in his books on the subject.

Many of these accounts are similar to the following ones from the Randall V. Mills Memorial Archive of Northwest Folklore at the University of Oregon in Eugene:

SCARED TO DEATH

I talked with a gal from British Columbia who allegedly made a sighting that is interesting in the respect we are talking about

because she was out camping at the time with her husband near a lake they, ah, had been there a short time when, ah, she decided to go out into a clear cut area and gather some firewood . . . . She was bent over gathering this firewood and she saw this thing watching her. Now, um, she of course got pretty frightened, went back to camp, was too frightened, she said, to tell her husband because her husband might, ah, disbelieve her or her husband . . . might, ah, just, she didn't want to tell for fear that, for fear of the way he might react, he being a queer, so she kept it to herself as much as she could, but she couldn't sleep that night, she felt very uneasy, she felt as though the hair were standing straight up on her head, finally she broke and told her husband and her husband says, "My God, why didn't you tell me sooner? I felt the same way. I felt strange. I felt as though something bothered me about this place" and they packed up immediately and left. (Collected by Paul Axtell from Jack E. Sullivan of Canby, Oregon in December, 1973.)

A similar story is set on the mountains behind Vancouver:

A BRITISH COLUMBIA BIGFOOT

COLLECTOR: I've been trying to explain what the Sasquatch is for X, she's from New York. Do you know any good stories?

INFORMANT: Hey, that's strange, I'd just been thinking about this truckdriver that picked me up when I was hitching up from L.A. last month. We stopped for lunch along the way and he told me the time he saw the thing himself. He called it Bigfoot though, not Sasquatch.

X: What'd he say about it?

INFORMANT: Well, first he started talking about 'Nam [Viet Nam] and how when he'd been there he'd kept getting this scary feeling every once and awhile where the hairs on the back of his neck would stick out and he'd get shivery all over. He came back and was living with his grandparents up in Vancouver, B.C. One night they got in a fight and he left . . . do you know Vancouver at all?

COLLECTOR: A little, I've been there a couple times.

INFORMANT: Well, there's a road that goes up behind Grouse Mountain and he drove part way up and parked there. He was sitting there when he felt that scary sensation on his neck again. He got so nervous that he drove right off. He went back the next night, just as it was getting dark and he got the same scary feeling. This time he stayed and he said that he was sitting there looking out over the low

hills with the moon rising when all of a sudden a huge two-footed animal lumbered across the nearby horizon. It was too big to be a bear and it walked on its hind legs until it went out of sight. (Collected by Helen Rockey from an informant anonymous by request on June 16, 1974.)

Construction crews or lumbercamp gangs have sometimes reported encounters with the Sasquatch. The following is a retold version of one such report from Big Horn Dam, about twenty miles west of Nordegg, Alberta, on August 23, 1969:

> There is the old report . . . getting old now, of the workers there were about 15 men or a larger number of men building this dam, and they were looking up on top of this hill and they saw this creature up there watching them and, ah, they thought it was unusual. It looked like a man anyway, but it seemed to be bigger and had hair and so forth. It sat down and they estimated its height because they compared its height when it was sitting with the height of a tree I think or rock and later they went up and they had men looking up there comparing the height of a man to the rock or tree and they estimated his height was fifteen feet. Now that's a good bit big for any man walking on two feet, perhaps they didn't make their estimation right, but one can certainly deduct that it was big. (Collected by Paul Axtell from Jack E. Sullivan, December 1973.)

A more precise "eye-witness" account in Green's *Year of the Sasquatch* gives more specific details, e.g., there were five men altogether watching; the creature was visible for almost an hour, ten minutes of which it sat; its height was estimated by comparing its size and a man's height to trees in the background. The difference between these two versions of the same event – one told from immediate experience and the other second-hand – is a good example of how belief tales and superstitions often become generalized through passage in the oral tradition.

Many other tales tell of Sasquatch frightening people, very occasionally coming into settled territory or disturbing work camps, being sighted in the headlights of cars, and so forth. Since the mid-1950s Sasquatch reports have increased significantly both in the United States and Canada. Interestingly enough, in British Columbia, the Sasquatch himself is seen more often than are his footprints, whereas in the west coast American states the reverse is true.

Despite media portrayals of Bigfoot beliefs and sightings during frontier times, the Sasquatch was not really "discovered" by Americans, in the sense that the general populace became widely aware of the creature, until 1958. Since then, sightings, hunts, footprint casts, innumera-

ble newspaper and magazine accounts, and even films (three supposedly of the creature itself and one Hollywood-type "monster" documentary) have become widely known in both Canada and the United States. Professional anthropologists, folklorists, zoologists, and other scholars as well as interested laymen of various backgrounds have devoted considerable attention to the Sasquatch, yet it remains a mystery, though one which now intrigues many people, and which, as a result, is exploited for publicity and profit.

Today the Ogopogo is in a similar position. There are regular sightings of the creature at the same time as it has become symbolic of the Okanagan region, is used in much advertising, and is commemorated in souvenirs, statues, and even an official B.C. Government Department of Recreation and Conservation marker at Squally Point on the west side of Okanagan Lake reading:

> OGOPOGO'S HOME: Before the unimaginative, practical white man came, the fearsome lake monster, N'ha-a-itk, was well known to the primitive superstitious Indians. His home was believed to be a cave at Squally Point, and small animals were carried in the canoes to appease the serpent. Ogopogo is seen each year – but now by white men!

Despite the many sightings, there are relatively few descriptive details, making even a composite picture rather vague. Essentially, Ogopogo is said to be serpentine, dark (often grey-black or deep green) in colour, large (up to sixty feet long), and very strong. It moves – often very quickly – in undulations so that it is most frequently identified by humps appearing above water. It has a head like that of either a sheep or a horse and is, despite earlier categorization as a carnivore, supposedly at least partly vegetarian.

The earliest known records of Ogopogo are the pictographs (drawings on rocks) near Lake Okanagan done before the arrival of the white man. The Okanagan Valley Indians had many stories about and names for this lake demon, monster, or sacred creature which they dreaded. They avoided the Squally Point region, and lived in terror of a storm anywhere on the lake, for they thought that the beast would vent its legendary fury by lashing the waves with its tail, then would rise from the lake and kill them. Travel on the lake therefore commonly necessitated special ceremonies and protective markings on the canoes.

When the first white settlers arrived in the Okanagan Valley in the latter half of the nineteenth century, some of them displayed considerable fear of the lake creature. Men patrolled the lakeshore near Kelowna with guns to protect their homes and families, and some supposedly even tried to catch the beast with makeshift monster fish-lines made of light cable ending in iron hooks baited with fresh meat.

Numerous sightings – both from pioneer days and more recent times – are recounted in Dorothy Hewlett Gellatly's *A Bit of Okanagan History* and R.P. MacLean's pamphlet *Ogopogo: His Story.* In her article on Ogopogo in the *B.C. Motorist* (November-December 1973), Mary Moon gives several oral accounts of sightings including a detailed description of a 1949 incident involving one Leslie Kerry, his wife, and guests. Mr. Kerry was about to take his guests out on the lake in his motorboat when he saw Ogopogo about a hundred feet away, lying on the water with "some thirty snakelike feet visible." The creature's body was shiny, between eight and twelve inches around, and dark olive green "like the back of a trout." There were no fins, but Ogopogo's tail was forked like that of a sockeye salmon, and bobbing up and down. Since no head was visible, Mr. Kerry presumed that the creature was feeding on the lake weeds. Kerry had his guest, a Mr. W. F. Watson, quietly row the boat closer. Watson stopped shortly, however, fearing that the children with them would be frightened or attacked. Everyone there thought that they were seeing the Ogopogo whose sinuous body was showing "about three undulations, apparently separated from each other by a space in which that part of the undulation would have been underwater. The length of each of the undulations that could be seen would have been about five feet." The party watched for five to ten minutes as the whole thing submerged slightly and came back up. Then Kerry called his wife on shore who took a close look, then went to get the binoculars and to call the neighbours. In all, the Ogopogo was visible for some fifteen minutes.

Other accounts have appeared with considerable regularity in British Columbian newspapers. For instance, on July 7, 1954, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that Ogopogo had been sighted by fifteen people at a resort at Peachland. The resort owner, A. M. Moore, who had seen the creature before, said that there were four flat humps visible and that Ogopogo was at least fifty feet long. The lake monster disappeared when a plane flew overhead.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of these stories is that Ogopogo has gradually been transformed from the vicious monster known to the Indians and early settlers into a frightening but beneficent Okanagan mascot. Even the adoption of the name "Ogopogo" reveals this change. Derived from a parody of a popular English music-hall song about a funny and fanciful creature, Ogopogo gradually became accepted as the appropriate name for the local denizen in the late 1920s.

Today, the creature is regarded as the symbol of the region, and of major events held there like the annual Kelowna Regatta. Some people maintain that the Ogopogo is merely a publicity stunt to attract tourists and promote the regatta, and, without a doubt, it is used in this manner. For instance, annually at regatta time, offerings are made to the beast

with great ceremony and publicity, so that the weather will be fair for the celebrations. There are, however, many people who are firm in their belief in the creature. Some have formed the Ogopogo Serendipity Society; others harbour their belief silently; and still others strive to validate the lake monster. For example, J. G. Ridland argued that it might be the progeny of a fertile prehistoric egg preserved by a cataclysmic change in temperature in the cold (1°C) bottom water of Lake Okanagan, then propelled by a seismic disturbance to warmer, shallower water suitable to hatch it.[5]

There are many similarities among the recent international eye-witness accounts of the Sasquatch and the Ogopogo. Both also have parallels in the recorded folk traditions of many nations, and fall within the motif categories in Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*.[6] The tales about these monsters are usually told in one of two ways: either as true stories of personal or second-hand experience, or as tall tales of fabulous beings. This distinction is, essentially, made on the basis of belief since the former stories involve at least some literal belief in the monsters while the latter are grounded in fantasy. This duality of tales probably dates back to the native peoples, as Suttles argues in his paper "On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch."

Most accounts of the monsters are short, relatively simple, and largely unpatterned. They generally take the form of personal anecdotes or reminiscences, seldom verging on the more definitely structured forms of folktales or becoming sufficiently widespread and standardized to be classified as belief legends. Where there is no belief among the community of tellers or listeners, the stories assume many of the characteristics of tall tales.

The most obvious uses of these monster traditions – publicity and tourism – have already been mentioned. Some people also use the stories to entertain themselves or others, to frighten children into good behaviour, and to delineate special groups of monster hunters and other enthusiasts. Canadian tellers and their audiences commonly associate these stories and the monsters themselves with particular geographic regions, primarily British Columbia. While environmental factors are insufficient to explain the existence and nature of the monster tales, they have certainly had a strong formative influence on these stories. Natural features often play a significant role in the tales themselves: for example, the forested mountains in the Sasquatch stories or lake conditions in the Ogopogo tales. More significantly, at least some of these monster accounts undoubtedly arise from natural conditions. It is not at all difficult to imagine beasts of manifold forms lurking in the thickly forested, frequently mist-covered Coast Range mountains of British Columbia. Also, a very deep lake, bottomless according to some accounts, and given to unpredictable squalls, is food for the inventive mind. Both

locales, then, are somewhat fear-inspiring, for they are, to some degree, unknown, largely uncontrolled, and given to changeable conditions. To provide himself with immediately satisfying explanations for such natural phenomena, and to make tangible his fear, "Man tends to conceive the conceivable," as John Napier remarked in *Bigfoot*.[7]

The monsters are clearly vestiges of the retreating wilderness. Stories about them indicate the persistence of the garrison mentality which, according to many scholars, was engrained in Canada's early settlers. This mentality results from the isolation of pockets of civilization amidst the wilderness and the zealous protection of these pockets, or garrisons, from the dangerous, frightening wilderness. The Sasquatch and Ogopogo are, then, symbolic of this danger and fear. Stories in which they are not terribly fearsome such as most of the more recent Ogopogo accounts indicate man's gradual conquest of the wilderness and of his fears associated with it. There are decidedly fewer stories of harmless, non-frightening Sasquatch than similar stories of Ogopogo in part because the Coast Mountains are largely uninhabited, unexplored, and therefore unknown, whereas the Okanagan region is well-populated and thoroughly civilized.

These monster traditions are an integral part of the cultural identity in the regions to which they pertain. In fact, they are among the very few traditions recognized by the Anglo-Canadian majority group in British Columbia which, like most Anglo-Saxon groups, has failed to identify with or through its own folk traditions. It is typical of western Anglo-Canadians to utilize the traditions of the native peoples for cultural expression. Stories about the Sasquatch and Ogopogo illustrate this pseudo-Indianism of the west and indicate the exploitation of native peoples' traditions by western Canadians for the development and maintenance of their distinctiveness.

This last point partly explains the currency of monster traditions in the west, but not in the east of Canada. Eastern Canadians have not relied as much upon native peoples' traditions for the creation and expression of their local cultural identity since, unlike western Canadians, they have had their own shared traditions to use for such purposes. Except among certain minority cultural groups, community-oriented and based traditions, like *Märchen*, legends, and ballads, are difficult to find in western Canada, though not so in the east. The settlement pattern of the country was largely responsible for this situation, for eastern Canada was settled early, by relatively homogeneous groups of people who lived together in villages while western Canada was settled during the industrial era, largely by individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The social and cultural circumstances in the west, then, fostered the creation and preservation of individual traditions like anecdotes, tall tales, and reminiscences – categories to which the monster tales usually belong.

One other reason for the prevalence of monster stories in British Columbia is the fact that wildernesses, and mountainous forested wildernesses in particular, are the legendary milieu of such creatures. These wildernesses exist in few places any more; British Columbia is certainly one of them.

British Columbians, and some other Westerners, maintain and popularize their monsters partly because these creatures are something distinctive which Easterners do not have. The beasts represent the mystery, strength, and untamed nature of large parts of the Canadian west, especially British Columbia. As this area moves fully into the twentieth century, becomes thoroughly "civilized" and populated, the monsters may vanish. Then again, they may persist because they may really be there, or because mankind naturally believes that they are there – somewhere.

16. URBAN TALES

Susan Smith

MIGRATORY LEGENDS

One of the most flourishing types of folklore in modern society is the migratory "belief legend," sometimes known as the "urban tale." As Linda Degh notes, "Legends do not seem to wither under the impact of urban life. On the contrary, they appear to be the hardiest of folk narrative forms, not only in adjusting easily to modern conditions, but by generating new types based on the most up-to-date issues of contemporary life."

Such legends are particularly rife among teen-agers, who sometimes call them "scary stories." These tales, which are always sworn to be true, are told at social get-togethers such as pyjama parties, pub gatherings, nights at summer camps, canoe trips, or camp reunions. Usually some evidence is cited to establish the event as truth, and many are carefully localized. However, the most common legends are at least continent-wide. Linda Degh says that the type usually exists in a "fragmentary, incomplete form" and has a "tendency to be more communal than any other folklore genre in its composition and performance."

Susan Smith collected the following Ontario versions of some of the most common belief legends in 1973 from teen-agers who lived in Toronto or its suburbs and who had heard them in summer camps. "The Hook," "The Boyfriend's Death," and "The Babysitter" are all